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U.S. VIETNAMESE RELATIONS AND THE MIA'S

ANNCR:

LATER THIS WEEK, THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL WILL TAKE UP VIETNAM'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE WORLD ORGANIZATION. VOA NEWS ANALYST JOSEPH SULLIVAN HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS.

VOICE:

THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAD POSTPONED CONSIDERATION OF VIETNAM'S APPLICATION FOR U.N. MEMBERSHIP UNTIL AFTER THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTAL ELECTIONS. THAT DECISION WAS TAKEN THE DAY AFTER THE CHIEF U.S. DELEGATE ANNOUNCED THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD VETO THE VIETNAMESE APPLICATION BECAUSE THERE HAD BEEN NO PROGRESS IN OBTAINING A FULL ACCOUNTING FROM HANOI OF AMERICAN SERVICEMEN MISSING IN VIETNAM.

THEN, SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER ANNOUNCED ON OCTOBER 24 THAT HANOI HAD ACCEPTED AN AMERICAN PROPOSAL TO BEGIN TALKS AIMED AT IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. AS YET, NO DATE HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED FOR THE TALKS, THOUGH IT'S GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT THEY WILL BEGIN BEFORE THE END OF THIS MONTH. BUT, U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT A COMPLETE ACCOUNTING OF AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION IN THE VIETNAM WAR IS AN ABSOLUTE PRECONDITION OF ANY IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND HANOI.

THE QUESTION OF THE MISSING AMERICAN SERVICEMEN -- SOME SEVEN HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIVE IN ALL OF INDOCHINA AND FIVE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE IN VIETNAM -- IS BROADLY PERCEIVED IN THE UNITED STATES AS A BASIC HUMANITARIAN ISSUE WHICH MUST BE

RESOLVED. FEELINGS CUT ACROSS POLITICAL PARTY LINES, AND BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE BY HANOI OF MISSING-IN-ACTION INFORMATION WAS CLEAR DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, AS WELL, AGREES ON THAT WHATEVER THEIR DIFFERENCES MAY BE ABOUT THE VIETNAM WAR OR ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF TRYING TO ESTABLISH NORMAL RELATIONS WITH THE HANOI GOVERNMENT.

WHILE THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY OF THE MISSING AMERICANS SURVIVE, IT HAS LONG BEEN CLEAR THAT THE VIETNAMESE HAVE INFORMATION ON SOME MISSING PERSONNEL. BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR, THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT, IN FACT, ACKNOWLEDGED POSSESSION OF THE REMAINS OF FORTY-SEVEN AMERICANS WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY IN SOUTH VIETNAM, BUT REFUSED TO RETURN THEM. THAT ADMISSION CAME ONLY AFTER THE UNITED STATES PRESENTED THE COMMUNIST SIDE WITH FILES ON OVER ONE HUNDRED MISSING AMERICANS WHOSE NAMES WERE MENTIONED IN COMMUNIST MEDIA FOLLOWING THEIR CAPTURE OR DISAPPEARANCE.

CERTAINLY THERE IS NOTHING UNREASONABLE IN WASHINGTON'S DEMAND ON BEHALF OF THE FAMILIES OF THE MISSING AMERICANS FOR CIVILIZED BEHAVIOR ON THE PART OF HANOI NOW -- TWO YEARS AFTER THE TERMINATION OF THE UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN COMBAT OPERATIONS THERE. AND THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT VIETNAM HAS A HUMANITARIAN OBLIGATION TO ACCOUNT FOR THE MISSING AMERICANS.

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